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With over 11,000 inland lakes, thousands of miles of rivers and streams, and shoreline on four of the Great Lakes, Michigan is truly a water wonderland! Fun and adventure is never far away whether you love to boat, sail, fish, canoe or kayak.

In fact, Michigan is the number one boating state in the nation, outpacing even the year-round warm weather states of Florida and California. With one million registered boats and thousands of registered personal watercraft, our waterways can get crowded and busy. It's important to know the rules, and practice safety sense and good seamanship while enjoying the water.

Taking the proper precautions and emphasizing safety helps minimize the risk of accidents. Do your part to help keep Michigan waters a safe place for everyone to enjoy. Before hitting the waves, keep these safety tips mind:

- Michigan law requires boats be equipped with one life vest for each passenger onboard.
- All children should wear appropriately fitting floatation devices.
- Don't drink alcohol. It is illegal to operate a boat or personal watercraft while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Maintain a safe speed. Excessive speed is a leading factor in most reported accidents.
- If operating a personal watercraft, make sure the ignition safety switch and wrist lanyard are in working order.
- Take a boating safety class. Most accidents are caused by operator errors.
- Know the weather conditions before setting out. Continue to monitor weather developments while on the water.
- Check your boat and motor regularly. Make sure all safety equipment is in working order.
- Leave a float plan with a responsible person.

For more safety hints and information, please contact my office toll-free at (866) 305-2136 or by e-mail at ofcstamas@senate.michigan.gov for a free *Guide to Safe Boating and Fishing in Michigan*. For up-to-date information on Michigan boating laws, rules and responsibilities, visit www.michigan.gov/dnr to access the **Michigan Boating Guide**. Or pick up a print copy at many Secretary of State branch offices.

Boating safe and smart only adds to the fun of the boating experience. As you head for the shores, I hope you and your family enjoy your time on all of Michigan's great lakes and waterways!